



Invasive Plant Species Assessment Working Group

10/29/03 Meeting

Rural Development Conference Room, Indianapolis

Attending: Ellen Jacquart (TNC, INPAWS), Tom Good (DNR- Div. of Reclamation), Bob Waltz (DNR - Div. of Ent. and PPath), Brian MacGowan (The Wildlife Society, IN Chapter), Jeff Kiefer (USFWS), Burney Fischer (DNR - Div. of Forestry), Ellsworth P. Christmas (Purdue Univ., Dept. of Agronomy), Todd Hutson (Vermillion Co. extension agent), Phil O'Connor (DNR - Div. of Forestry), Rick Phillabaum (INDOT), Mike Cline (INLA), Keith Johnson (Coop. Extension Service Agronomy), Dave Gorden (ASLA).

1. Welcome and introductions.

2. **Update on IPSAWG brochure.** Ellen passed around copies of a draft IPSAWG brochure to be used to explain the group's mission and activities. She noted that a new logo had been finalized (shown above) and was incorporated in the brochure. Any and all comments re. the content and format of the brochure are welcome; please send them to Ellen by Dec. 15 for inclusion in a final draft that will be brought to the next meeting for approval.
3. **Update on *Phragmites* assessment.** Ellen reported that Rick Phillabaum and she met last week to assess *Phragmites*. Using comments emailed to her by others in IPSAWG and the 14 survey reports sent in, they assessed the species as having very high ecological damage, high potential for expansion, high difficulty of management, and low economic value. Recommendations were that this species should not be bought, sold, recommended, or planted for any reason in the state. Keith Johnson noted that we should document the fact that others contributed to the assessment through email so it was clear that the results of the assessment were not just from Rick and myself. Ellen will do so. Rick noted that, while *Phragmites* is clearly moving down DOT ROW's, INDOT generally does not control species not listed as noxious in the ROWs. Bob raised the question of whether *Phragmites* should be recommended to be added to the noxious weed list. The potential impacts of this to landowners were discussed. Though more survey information would be needed, there's a general sense that most of the populations are on DOT ROW's, state fish and wildlife areas, state-owned reclaimed mine lands, and state and TNC nature preserves in the north part of the state rather than on private land. Keith will discuss the implications of noxious weed listing on seed inspections with Larry Nees and potentially we'll follow up with another discussion. Ellen will forward the assessment documents to be added to the IPSAWG website.
4. **Special presentation - Nyjer seed in Indiana.** Todd Hutson, Vermillion Co. extension agent, gave an excellent presentation on Nyjer seed (*Guizotia abyssinica*) as a specialty crop in Indiana. Through a Value-added Grant from the Commissioner of Agriculture, they began planting Nyjer seed a few years ago to look at its potential as a specialty crop. Nyjer seed is imported from Ethiopia and India for use as birdfood in the U.S. Often incorrectly referred to as 'thistle seed', it is not a thistle though it is in the composite family. It has been planted in MN since the 1970's and is undergoing trials in IL and MO as well as IN. There is a potential gross return of \$500/acre if yields are high enough, though so far yields are not in that range.

Nyjer seed has no vegetative reproduction (stolons or rhizomes) and requires bees for pollination. It is a leafy annual with a shallow taproot and is susceptible to white mold and lugus bugs. It is planted in May through broadcast or drill seeding. It flowers from early Sept. until frost.

Potentially the seed could be sold to the three major birdseed wholesalers located in IN. It is estimated that 5,000 to 6,000 pounds of seed/year would meet those wholesalers needs. However, the seed would bring a higher price if it was sold in wildlife/conservation seed packets to private landowners.

Ellen raised the point that this species is on the World Weed List as invasive in some parts of the world (though she hasn't found the references documenting specifically where yet) and asked what sort of screening process agricultural species go through before entry into either the country or the state. Todd noted that USDA (Plant Introduction Section) does have a screening process, but no one in the meeting was aware of what that screening process involved. Ellen had checked for any records of invasion by this species in the US and found none. Todd has not seen it move from the farm fields where it was planted. He discussed potential effects to birds, both positive (providing a food source) and negative (increased congregation of birds causing increased disease problems).

We discussed a potential role for IPSAWG in the screening of new agricultural specialty crops. Ellsworth made it clear that no one wants to introduce a species that becomes a problem down the road; he mentioned Jerusalem artichokes as a specialty crop that has caused problems for farmers due to its persistent resprouting once planted in an area. It was also noted that many of our current invasive problems in natural areas derived from agency releases - multiflora rose, autumn olive, etc. Todd and Ellsworth provided a handout from Western Illinois University that lists other potential specialty crops for the midwest, including Cuphea, Kenaf, Milkweed, Sicklepod, Crambe, Vernonia, Field Pennycress, Sunflower, and Okra. We agreed it would be a good idea for IPSAWG to 'pre-screen' these by looking for any information on their potential invasiveness. More information on potential specialty crops can be found at the New Crop website (http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/duke_energy/.html).

5. **Update on invasive species website progress.** Bob reported there was a good meeting on Oct. 7 to discuss the new invasivespecies.in.gov website. Entry points, audience, and other aspects of the site were discussed in preparation for the site's design. The site is intended to be state-wide, covering all taxa of invasive species, and based in science. The next meeting is Nov. 14, and the intent is to have something up and running by Jan.
6. **Update on invasive species issues in DNR.** Bob discussed the ongoing review of invasive species statutes, rules, and policies in the DNR. He and others are looking at current authorities, gaps in authority that need to be addressed, and model laws. He noted that there are three levels to consider. The legislature provides statutes, the DNR develops administrative rules to implement the statutes, and the DNR develops policies for internal actions. This review is being readied for the 2004 Summer Study session. Bob will be contacting IPSAWG members for review in the near future.

7. **Other updates.** Keith Johnson asked the group for ideas on what a permittee could plant on gypsum piles to stabilize them. He thought of low-endophyte fescue but wanted suggestions on less-invasive options. Rick Phillabaum discussed INDOT's approach to high lime areas in ringing the area with compost to bring the pH down and using materials to neutralize the alkaline runoff; he can provide more information for IDEM and the permittee.

Ellen noted that a group in the Midwest is working to start an umbrella invasive plant species group to better coordinate and communicate efforts on invasive species in the midwest. Funding is being sought for a coordinator position. Representatives of each state and each stakeholder group in the midwest are being sought for the steering committee. Mike Cline will think about an appropriate representative for NLA. Ellen also pointed out a recent article on invasives in Fine Gardening magazine - it actually mentions Indiana's efforts to assess invasive species.

8. Next meeting. The group discussed and decided to assess Asian bittersweet next. Lee Casebere has agreed to lead this effort. The next IPSAWG meeting will be January 6, 2004 at 9 am, place to be determined.